# Full comments submitted in response to the Draft EA for Dome Mountain WMA Hay Lease Renewal:

### Comment 1:



## [EXTERNAL] Dome



Bert Otis <otisranch@wispwest.net> Sat 20-Feb-21 07:40

To: Yarnall, Michael

Dear Fish Wildlife & Parks Commission,

I support the continued lease of the Dome Mountain Agricultural Land. The lessee has done a good job of doing what they are suppose to do. If these hay fields were left without irrigation and renovation they wouldn't be hardly worth anything for wildlife habitat. This is a win/win for everyone.

Thank you

Bert Otis

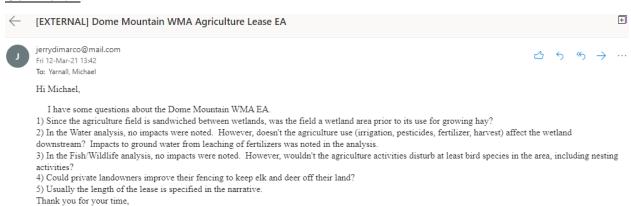
PO Box 60

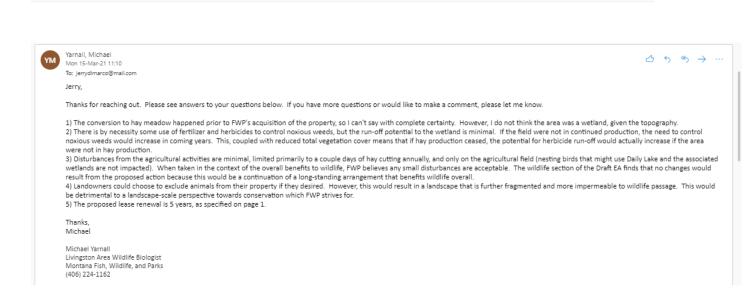
Emigrant, MT 59027

Reply Forward

### Comment 2:

Jerry DiMarco Bozeman









#### Hi Michael

Thanks for your prompt reply. I was looking for the lease length in the Narrative summary discussion, completely missed it at the top of pg 1.

In 3), I was referring to birds that might nest in the agriculture field. Understand your point about overall benefits to wildlife.

In 2), it does not make sense that the noxious weed problem would get worse if the having operation ceased. Would the lack of irrigation be a factor in reduced vegetation? If so, what is the weed problem on the other grasslands in the area? They must have been used for winter range for millenia before the WMA was designated. Are you battling weeds on those grasslands? Thank you for your time.





Jerry,

You are correct that there is some potential to disturbances to birds which may nest on the hayfield. However, the single cutting schedule means that haying activity occurs primarily in mid-late July. This offers time for many species to hatch prior to cutting. Again, FWP considers this small potential for disturbances to be acceptable within the larger context which primarily benefits wildlife.

If hay production were to cease, the residual alfalfa would eventually decline, and yes without irrigation ground cover would decline. We do have weed problems in the area, both on the native grasslands above the hayfield, and on the hayfield. Some weeds are very widespread (e.g. cheatgrass), but there are others (e.g. hoary alyssum). Because the hayfield has been converted from grassland (i.e., it is a disturbed site) it would be more vulnerable to further degradation by weeds without continued cultivation/maintenance. The haying activities help FWP manage weeds because the lessee controls weeds on the field, allowing FWP to focus limited resources on other areas. Some weed management is accomplished with herbicides, but the cutting activity helps control some weeds too, e.g. hoary alyssum is a biennial and cutting can help prevent it from going to seed. I hope that helps explain why weed control efforts would need to increase absent the haying activity.

Thanks for your interest and concern. If you wish to submit a formal comment, the deadline is 18 March.

Michael

Michael Yarnall Livingston Area Wildlife Biologist Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (406) 224-1162

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Thank you for the additional information. I guess it's the best solution for a bad situation. My only comment would be, if it's helpful to expand the WMA, I would support that. Thanks for your time,